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Educational Writings

REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

The history of the high-school curriculum in the Middle West.—Heretofore, those who have desired a characterization of the development of high-school curricula have had to be content with single examples of such curricula or with assertions and conjectures, many of them baseless. Professor Stout has set the unfounded conjectures aside and put in their place a comprehensive and authoritative description¹ of that development in the North Central states.

After an introductory chapter on the "Early High School Movement," covering the curricular development in the high schools in the earliest stages, he presents in the three parts of his monograph the results of a careful study of almost four hundred curricula representing all half-decades from 1860 to 1900 and also more recent periods, bringing the investigation down to 1918. In Part I are to be found materials for the period from 1860 to 1890 on the "Number of Courses Offered," "Subjects Included in Curricula," "Constants and Variables," and "Influence of Size and Location of Schools." Part II describes the "Conditions and Changes in Subject-Matter" in English, the sciences, the social studies, foreign languages, and miscellaneous subjects, as shown in the textbooks used and elsewhere. Part III contains both types of data for the later period. The Appendix includes tables showing the detailed make-up of all curricula used in Parts I and III and a complete bibliography of all sources drawn upon in the study.

On the whole, the work of assembly, organization, and writing has been so commendably done that the reader is very infrequently moved to remonstrate. One wonders, however, if it would not have been possible to devise more graphic means than have been employed to give the reader a clearer and more lasting impression of the tendencies discovered. Could not, also, other terms have been used for the subjects which persist or do not persist in the offerings throughout a given period? Does it not lead to confusion to use, for example, the term "constants" in this sense, when its accepted usage is in connection with subjects required irrespective of curriculum pursued? Moreover, would not the work have been more nearly complete if a study of these constants had been included, using the term in the accepted sense?

¹ JOHN ELBERT STOUT, *The Development of High School Curricula in the North Central States from 1860 to 1918*. "Supplementary Educational Monographs," Vol. III, No. 3. Chicago: Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1921. Pp. xii+322. \$2.00.

These relatively minor detractions cannot, however, prevent the monograph from being useful and valuable. Indeed, it will prove to be much more widely useful than are most pieces of educational research, especially those of a historical character. The high-school principal will find its perusal profitable. It is well adapted for use in study-groups of high-school teachers or by committees concerned with the problem of reorganizing the high-school program of studies. Teachers of special academic subjects will find in it the origins of many current practices in their particular fields. It will also, of course, be excellent material for courses in secondary education dealing with the curriculum and in the history of secondary education.

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Experiments in the teaching and appreciation of literature.—Current practices of teaching literary reading in the intermediate and high-school grades have for some time called forth considerable criticism. For the most part, this criticism has been focused upon analytical methods which in turn have been carried along by the prevailing type of reading textbook. A recent monograph¹ by Professor Hosis gives a report of a series of experiments, the purpose of which is to develop a scientific method of evaluating such textbook materials.

The monograph opens with an extended review of the purposes of literature and the methods of teaching it in school, as expressed by a large number of competent authorities. The aim of the author is to get the best possible general theoretical statement of purpose and method, which can then be subjected to experimental evaluation. In summarizing the author says:

The weight of authority concerning the teaching of literature to children appears to be in favor of informal methods of treatment. The recitation in literature, particularly the recitation looking to appreciation or enjoyment, should be devoted chiefly to hearing the selection well read and seeking to enter into the experience which it provides by the exercise of imaginative sympathy growing out of the recollection of the hearer's own past. It is well to approach the selection with a certain pleasurable anticipation and curiosity not clouded by thoughts of the author himself or of what some critic has said as to the meaning or worth of the selection. Throughout the study the selection should be seen as a complete unity of varied parts [p. 22].

The second chapter presents the results of an analysis of the questions and study-helps given in four representative literary readers. A method of classifying these questions was devised which is based on the idea of purpose. In the first series of readers there appeared a total of 4,191 questions distributed as follows: (a) to test or fix memory of fact, opinion, or estimate, 58.7 per cent; (b) to stimulate observation, analysis, and reflection, 17.7 per cent; and (c) to stimulate and direct objective activities so as to clear up or vivify the impres-

¹ JAMES FLEMING HOSIC, *Empirical Studies in School Reading*. "Teachers College Contributions to Education," No. 114. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1921. Pp. viii+174.